
Fr. Michael McKinnon

The Shared Table

JULY 2022



The procession through the Plaza

Greetings

Greetings to all from a very chilly Yanaoca. Well, chilly once the sun begins to go down in the afternoon, reaching temperatures below zero, but quite sunny and warm during the day.

On the 25th of July, we celebrated our Parish Patron, St James (or Santiago as he's known here.) This year the locals went all out as we were able to celebrate publicly for the first time since the pandemic.

A vigil Mass on Sunday evening and another Mass on Monday morning were both very well attended. Following the morning Mass, we all participated in a procession with the image of St James along the main street and into the plaza. Both evenings saw a rather boisterous fiesta with local dance groups and very loud music well into the early hours.

Our continuing commitment - Yanaoca

Community Collaborations

During the mornings and afternoons, the Parish hosted free consultations for eye tests and the prescription of glasses at a considerably reduced price. This community service met with a great response as it conveniently coincided with the Parish Fiesta and therefore many people from the countryside were in town to take advantage of the offer.

In a town the size of Yanaoca, it is important to look for ways of working together with bodies like the Municipality, Health Centre, Police, and Educational Centres to improve services or to ensure that those with needs are more effectively serviced. Fortunately, the Parish enjoys a very good relationship with all of these bodies.



Waiting patiently for an eye test

Breakfast

Presently I am in communication with the Municipality regarding the provision of breakfast for the elderly who arrive to receive their monthly pension. Many walk long distances and arrive any time from 7:30 am on, and have to wait whilst sitting on the footpath for two or three hours. The Parish Centre is a stone's throw from the Municipality, and with a few adjustments, we have the capacity to set up a workable kitchen to provide a simple breakfast at a minimal cost.

At present we are able to provide something by way of sustenance, but more planning and restructuring need to be done to provide an adequate environment for those participating. This will be organized through funds from the Shared Table.



Early Intervention Program

Out in the Campo (countryside), there appear to me to be various needs that we'll look to begin addressing as time goes on. There are a few attempts through the local municipality to provide services through an Early Intervention Program, but funding seems to be minimal.



In the community of Hampatura, about forty minutes from Yanaoca, I have agreed to provide for the Program a basic parish building made of mud brick with only a dirt floor, but it is in need of renovation. Such programs are extremely necessary for these isolated communities, so I intend to continue to investigate possibilities.



Basic Infrastructure for the Early Intervention Program

Youth Program

As a Parish, we are also investigating the re-establishment of a program that provided skills for unemployed youth of the district. This program ceased to operate during the pandemic, but we still have equipment including sewing machines, carpentry tools, and computers in a building that acted as the centre for the program. What we need to find out is whether there is a sufficient number of young people interested to warrant reopening the service. If the demand is not sufficient, we will focus our attention on providing after-school tutoring for senior secondary students, which is perhaps a more urgently needed service.

Our continuing commitment

Vegetable Gardens

I am regularly in contact with Lucia Cuentas and the projects which continue to function in Lima. Andres continues to care for the Vegetable Garden in Cangallo, regularly rejuvenating the soil with fresh soil and manure from a garden centre not too far from the Parish. When I was there to visit last May, the garden certainly looked healthy and productive.



Andres tending the gardens

The Kitchens

The Kitchens are back into full swing after the pandemic and continue to provide meals for some of the elderly and more vulnerable members of the communities as well as the children of the communities.



There is a group of very faithful mothers who continue to work as coordinators of the Kitchens under the guidance of Lucy. I am grateful to Sr Mary Dwyer, an Australian Josephite living in Motupe, who has collaborated with me and Lucia for the past eight years or so for her continued dedication to The Shared Table.



Gratitude and Support

Thankfully the Peruvian priests who took over the Parish from the Columbans have continued to facilitate the operation of the Kitchens and the Baking Workshop, and always ask me to pass on their gratitude to all who continue to support the Shared Table. So, on their behalf, a big thank you.

Ongoing

Once again, on behalf of all who enjoy the benefits and blessings provided through the Shared Table, thank you to everyone who continues to support our communities and especially the children. I am still finding my feet to some extent up here in the Sierra, but it is clear that community needs are many and varied. I have no doubt that within the next six to twelve months we will have begun to develop a number of community projects and services thanks to the Shared Table. I look forward to keeping our supporters informed and ask that you continue to keep us in your prayers. You are all certainly in the prayers of the locals here. God bless - Fr Michael McKinnon